

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4140
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 2733

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, BM
SUBJ: 1977 COUP PLOT

SUMMARY: ON SEPTEMBER 3 THE BURMESE PRESS ANNOUNCED THE EXPOSURE OF A PLOT TO ASSASSINATE GUB LEADERS, SEIZE POWER AND ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT ARAKAN STATE. ALL THE PLOTTERS EXCEPT ONE HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED. THE PRESS ANNOUNCED THAT THE PLOTTERS HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH A "FOREIGN EMBASSY IN RANGOON." WE HAVE DETERMINED THAT THE EMBASSY IN QUESTION IS THE BANGLADESH EMBASSY, AND THE BANGLADESH MILITARY ATTACHE HAS BEEN ORDERED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. THE PLOT, AS DESCRIBED IN THE NEWSPAPER, HAD LITTLE OR NO HOPE OF SUCCEEDING AND WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN SERIOUSLY INVOLVED IN SUCH AN AFFAIR. NOEVERTHELESS, THERE IS STRONG EVIDENCE THAT THE BANGLADESH MILITARY ATTACHE HAD BEEN MEETING WITH SOME OF THE CONSPIRATORS. THESE MEETINGS AND THE PLOT CONTINUED THROUGH THE TIME THE BANGLADESH PRESIDENT MADE AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO BURMA LAST JULY. APPARENTLY THE GUB WAS AWARE OF THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE PLOT AT THAT TIME. BURMESE RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH ARE CERTAIN TO BE STRAINED AS THE RESULT OF THESE DISCLOSURES. THIS PLOT AND OTHER, PERHAPS UNRELATED, INCIDENTS OF BOMB EXPLOSIONSS IN RANGOON SERVE TO POINT UP THAT DESPERATE ELEMENTS DO EXIST IN

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BURMA THAT ARE WILLING TO GO TO ALMOST ANY EXTREME TO UNSEAT THE PRESENT REGIME. END SUMMARY.

1. ON SEPTEMBER 3, THE BURMESE PRESS ANNOUNCED THE ARREST OF SIX PERSONS FOR CONSPIRING TO ASSASSINATE GUB LEADERS AND TO ESTABLISH A "SEPARATE ARAKAN STATE." A SEVENTH CONSPIRATOR WAS ALSO NAMED, BUT HE IS STILL AT LARGE.

2. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS STORIES, U MAHN NGWE AUNG, A FORMER BURMA SOCIALIST PROGRAM PARTY (BSPP) MEMBER AND MEMBER OF A RANGOON DIVISION TOWNSHIP COOPERATIVE WAS DISMISSED FROM HIS POSITION AND PARTY MEMBERSHIP LAST YEAR FOR MISAPPROPRIATION OF COOPERATIVE FUNDS. HIS DISSATISFACTION OVER HIS DISMISSAL LED HIM TO SEEK OUT HIS FORMER SCHOOLMATE U MAHN DAR WAIK, WHO HAD BEEN IN DETENTION BETWEEN 1963 AND 1969 FOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES. THE TWO BEGAN TO PLOT MEANS OF ASSASSINATING GUB LEADERS, AND CONTACTED ANOTHER FRIEND, MAUNG HYAW HTOO, WHO IS IN CHARGE OF SOUND EQUIPMENT IN THE THEATER DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE. MAUNG KYAW HTOO, FEARING HE WAS UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR MISAPPROPRIATION OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTY, AGREED TO ASSIST IN THE PLOT. THE THREE PLANNED TO ASSASSINATE GUB LEADERS WHILE A CULTURAL TROUPE WAS ENTERTAINING A RECEPTION AT THE PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE.

3. THE PLOT THICKENS FROM THIS POINT AS U MAHN DAR WAIK WAS ARRESTED WHILE ATTEMPTING TO CONTACT KNU REBELS REGARDING FUNDS AND FIREARMS TO SUPPORT THE PLOT. U MAHN NGWE AUNG THEN CONTACTED ARAKAN DISSIDENTS FOR SUPPORT IN JULY 1976. THESE DISSIDENTS WERE U HTAIN LIN, ANOTHER FORMER BSPP MEMBER WHO HAD BEEN DISMISSED FROM THE PARTY FOR BREAK OF DISCIPLINE, U AUNG SUN THA, A RESIDENT OF AKYAB AND APPARENTLY A BUSINESS PARTNER OF U HTAIN LIN; AND U KYAW HLA AND U TUN KYAW, BOTH RESIDENT OF AKYAB. THIS GROUP HAD ALREADY BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSPIRING TO ESTABLISH A SECESSIONIST ARAKAN STATE. IN MAY OF THIS YEAR THEY FORMED AN UNDERGROUND ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS THE "LIBERATION AND RECONSTRUCTION LEAGUE OF ARAKAN" TO FURTHER THEIR CAUSE.

4. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS REPORTS, THESE ARAKANESE DISSIDENTS HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH A "FOREIGN EMBASSY IN RANGOON" TO OBTAIN ARMS AND FUNDS FOR THEIR ORGANIZATION. THEY PUT U MAHN NGWE AUNG IN TOUCH WITH A MEMBER OF THE EMBASSY AND HE HELD "FREQUENT MEETINGS" WITH THE EMBASSY OFFICER.

5. THE ABOVE IS THE PLOT IN A NUTSHELL. THE PRESS STATES THAT THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE BUREAU UNCOVERED THE PLOT AND ALL CONSPIRATORS EXCEPT U HYAW HLA HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED. COURT HEARINGS ON THE CASE ARE SET FOR SEPTEMBER 8 AND 16.

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4141

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RANGOON 2733

6. THE EMBASSY HAS DETERMINED THAT THE "FOREIGN EMBASSY" INVOLVED WAS THE BANGLADESH EMBASSY, AND THE BANGLADESH MILITARY ATTACHE HAS BEEN ORDERED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. (HE IS EXPECTED TO DEPART SEPTEMBER 4.) WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHETHER THE ATTACHE, LT. COL. AMIN AHMED CHOWDWY, WAS ACTING ON HIS OWN IN THIS AFFAIR OR UNDER ORDERS, BUT WE DO BELIEVE THE GUB HAS SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE OF HIS INVOLVEMENT. THE BANGLADESH AMBASSADOR, S.A. KARI, MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE INVOLVEMENT, BUT WE UNDERSTAND HE TOO WILL BE RECALLED, PERHAPS AFTER A FACE-SAVING INTERVAL. THERE WAS NO MENTION OF INVOLVEMENT BY THE BANGLADESH CONSULATE AT AKYAB. HOWEVER, GUB IRE OVER THE INCIDENT MAY PROMPT THE BURMESE TO ORDER THE CONSULATE CLOSED.

7. MUSLIMS IN THE ARAKAN STATE HAVE RECENTLY VOICE DIS-SATISFACTION WITH WHAT THEY TERM DISCRIMINATION AND DENIAL OF RIGHTS PRACTICED AGAINST THEM BY THE GUB. HOWEVER, WE KNOW OF NO OFFICIAL, CLANDESTINE SUPPORT FOR A SEPARATIST ARAKAN MOVEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH. NEVERTHE-LESS, THE PLOT WAS REACHING ITS CLIMAX AND APPARENTLY THE GUB WAS AWARE OF MOST OF THE DETAILS AT THE TIME THE PRESIDENT OF BANGLADESH MADE HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO BURMA LAST JULY. ONE OR BOTH SIDES MUST HAVE HAD TROUBLE
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SWALLOWING THE TOASTS TO GOODWILL AND FRIENDSHIP MADE AT THE TIME.

8. THE PLOT ITSELF HAD LITTLE HOPE OF SUCCEEDING. SECURITY AROUND PRESIDENT NE WIN IS SO TIGHT THAT CHANCES WOULD BE REMOTE FOR OUTSIDERS AS THESE PEOPLE WERE, TO BREAK THAT

SECURITY AND ASSASSINATE THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER LEADERS. FURTHER, THE PLOTTERS APPARENTLY HOPED TO SEIZE POWER AFTER THE ASSASSINATION, AND WITH NO ORGANIZATION, NO FURTHER PLANS TO SEIZE BORADCAST OR OTHER SENSITIVE FACILITIES AND NO ONE OF RANK TO GIVE ORDERS WHICH MIGHT BE CARRIED OUT BY THE MILITARY OR POLICE, THE PLOT BECOMES EVEN MORE SENSELESS. THEREFORE, WE HAVE GREAT RESERVATIONS IN CONNECTING IT TO ANY SERIOUS ATTEMPT BY THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT TO DESTABILIZE THE SITUATION IN BURMA.

9. IN WHAT WE BELIEVE WAS AN UNRELATED INCIDENT, A BOMB EXPLODED IN A GOVERNMENT OFFICE BUILDING JUST ONE BLOCK FROM THE EMBASSY ON SEPTEMBER 2. THERE WERE NO INJURIES, BUT THE EXPLOSION WAS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO RATTLE WINDOWS IN THE EMBASSY. IN THE PAST, BOMB EXPLOSIONS IN RANGOON HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THE PEOPLE'S POPULAR PARTY (PPP), AN ORGANIZATION MADE UP LARGELY OF FOLLOWERS OF FORMER BURMESE PRIME MINISTER U NU. PREVIOUS BLASTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE MAINLY IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS SUCH AS MOVIE HOUSES AND RAILROAD STATIONS OR AT LARGE PUBLIC GATHERINGS. THIS IS ONE OF THE FIRST BOMBS TO BE EXPLODED IN A GOVERNMENT BUILDING.

10. THE BOMBING AND THE PLOT MAY BE UNRELATED, BUT THEY DO POINT UP THAT THERE ARE DESPERATE ELEMENTS IN BURMA WILLING TO GO TO ALMOST ANY LENGTH TO DESTABILIZE AND OVERTHROW THE PRESENT REGIME.

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Message Attributes

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